

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-03 H-01 INR-05 L-01

NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 RSC-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15

USIA-06 SAJ-01 ACDA-05 AEC-05 IO-04 OES-02 /071 W

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R 252111Z OCT 74

FM AMEMBASSY PARIS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 3612

INFO AMEMBASSY ANKARA

AMEMBASSY ATHENS

AMEMBASSY BONN

AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS

AMEMBASSY COPENHAGEN

AMEMBASSY LISBON

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY LUXEMBOURG

AMEMBASSY OSLO

AMEMBASSY OTTAWA

AMEMBASSY REYKJAVIK

AMEMBASSY ROME

AMEMBASSY THE HAGUE

USMISSION EC BRUSSELS

USNMR SHAPE

USMISSION NATO

AMEMBASSY DUBLIN

AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

USCINCEUR

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 PARIS 25410

MILITARY ADDRESSEES ALSO FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, MPOL, MNUC, FR

SUBJECT: GISCARD ON DEFENSE

1. BEGIN SUMMARY: IN COURSE OF PRESS CONFERENCE

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OCTOBER 24, FRENCH PRESIDENT GISCARD D'ESTAING DESCRIBED

HIS VIEW OF FRENCH DEFENSE STRATEGY, SAYING THAT FRANCE'S STRATEGIC NUCLEAR FORCES WERE DIRECTED AGAINST NUCLEAR THREATS TOWARD FRANCE OR DIRECT THREATS TO FRENCH TERRITORY. OTHER THREATS SHOULD BE MET BY FRANCE'S CONVENTIONAL FORCES. HE HINTED THAT FRANCE'S ROLE IN WORLD REQUIRES THAT ITS CONVENTIONAL FORCE POSTURE BE IMPROVED, ALTHOUGH HE SAID CHANGES IN FRANCE'S MILITARY POSTURE WOULD BE CARRIED OUT WITHIN FORESEEABLE LIMITS OF FRANCE'S MILITARY BUDGET. END SUMMARY.

2. FRANCE'S STRATEGY: GISCARD SAID THAT FRANCE'S STRATEGIC NUCLEAR FORCES HAVE BEEN PRESENTED AS A DETERRENT FORCE, BUT IT HAS NOT BEEN SHOWN HOW DETERRENCE WOULD BE CARRIED OUT. TO CLARIFY THIS PROBLEM OF DEFINITION, HE SAID "THE OBJECT OF OUR NUCLEAR DETERRENCE . . . IS TO BE OPPOSED TO A NUCLEAR THREAT AGAINST OUR TERRITORY BY A NUCLEAR POWER, OR A THREAT OF INVASION OF OUR TERRITORY." WITH REGARD TO THREATS FROM NON-NUCLEAR POWERS, HE SAID THAT FRANCE SHOULD NOT USE, OR EVEN THREATEN TO USE, NUCLEAR MEANS AGAINST NON-NUCLEAR POWERS. HE NOTED THAT THIS POLICY (NO NUCLEAR THREAT AGAINST NON-NUCLEAR POWERS) WOULD PROMOTE NON-PROLIFERATION IF IT WERE MORE WIDELY ACCEPTED BECAUSE NON-NUCLEAR COUNTRIES WOULD NOT HAVE THE SAME PREOCCUPATION OR THE SAME INTEREST IN JOINING THE NUCLEAR CLUB.

3. FRANCE'S CONVENTIONAL FORCES: GISCARD SAID THAT FRANCE'S CONVENTIONAL FORCES LEAVE FRANCE POORLY PREPARED TO CONFRONT UNFORESEEN CIRCUMSTANCES IN TODAY'S WORLD. HE NOTED THAT THE RECENT CONFLICTS WHICH OCCURRED IN THE MEDITERRANEAN HAVE INVOLVED CONVENTIONAL FORCES AND THAT FRANCE HAS DEVOTED MUCH OF ITS DEFENSE EFFORT TO OBTAINING A SIGNIFICANT STRATEGIC NUCLEAR FORCE. AS A RESULT, IT DOES NOT HAVE A SUFFICIENT CONVENTIONAL CAPABILITY. THUS, HE CONCLUDED, "WE MUST HAVE CONVENTIONAL FORCES APPROPRIATE TO THE RANK OF OUR COUNTRY." HE ELABORATED THAT IN THE PAST FRANCE'S CONVENTIONAL FORCES HAVE BEEN SEEN AS A SUPPORT OR AN ADJUNCT TO

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R 252111Z OCT 74

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FRANCE'S STRATEGIC NUCLEAR FORCE. HE THOUGHT THE MOST
LIKELY HYPOTHESIS IN THE CURRENT WORLD COULD BE OF A
TOTALLY DIFFERENT TYPE OF CONFLICT (E.G., NON-NUCLEAR)
AND THAT A COUNTRY LIKE FRANCE MUST HAVE THE DIVERSIFIED
MILITARY CAPABILITIES "OF ITS SIZE AND ITS REALITY."

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"IT IS THUS RATHER IN THE CONCEPTION, THE REORGANIZATION

OF THESE FORCES, THEIR MOBILITY, AND THE TYPE OF ARMAMENT WHICH THEY HAVE THAT THIS SOLUTION SHOULD BE SOUGHT", HE SAID.

4. COMMENT: GISCARD'S COMMENTS SUGGEST THAT HIS CURRENT PREOCCUPATION FOCUSES MORE ON FRANCE'S CONVENTIONAL POSTURE THAN ON ITS STRATEGIC FORCES. IT IS UNCLEAR, HOWEVER, WHETHER THIS APPARENT EMPHASIS ON CONVENTIONAL FORCES SIGNALS A SHIFT IN FRANCE'S FORCE PLANNING TOWARD AN ENHANCED CONVENTIONAL CAPABILITY THAT MIGHT HAVE APPLICATION FOR THE DEFENSE OF NATO'S CENTRAL REGION, OR WHETHER GISCARD IS THINKING MORE IN TERMS OF PROVIDING FRANCE WITH MORE FLEXIBLE CONVENTIONAL MEANS FOR OVERSEAS INTERVENTION IN A MORE NARROW PURSUIT OF FRANCE'S NATIONAL INTEREST. IN THE LATTER CASE, THIS COULD INVOLVE SUCH AREAS AS THE MEDITERRANEAN, THE MIDDLE EAST, THE INDIAN OCEAN, AND AFRICA. MOREOVER, IF GISCARD DOES INTEND TO ENHANCE FRANCE'S CONVENTIONAL CAPABILITY, IT WILL BE INTERESTING TO SEE HOW HE ASSIGNS BUDGETARY PRIORITIES BETWEEN THE COMPETING GOALS OF IMPROVING FRANCE'S NUCLEAR CAPABILITIES, MEETING THE GROWING DEMANDS THAT PERSONNEL COSTS COULD IMPOSE ON FRENCH DEFENSE SPENDING, AND PROVIDING THE EQUIPMENT AND MOBILITY WHICH HE SAID FRANCE'S CONVENTIONAL POSTURE REQUIRES. IT IS ALSO UNCLEAR WHETHER GISCARD'S COMMENTS ON NON-PROLIFERATION SUGGEST A MORE FORTHCOMING GOF POLICY IN THAT REGARD. IN COMING WEEKS WE WILL SEEK A CLEARER DEFINITION OF FRANCE'S FUTURE CONVENTIONAL POSTURE AND ITS THINKING ON NON-PROLIFERATION.

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